

1950S ROCK -- CREATING A REVOLUTION

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Rock & roll music has never been morally innocent and wholesome when examined biblically. From its inception in the 1950s, rock music has promoted rebellion against the God of the Bible, not always openly, nor even in those exact terms, but rebellion just the same. Defiance of God-ordained authority and rejection of biblical morality is rebellion against God. 1950s rock literally changed the character of Western society and laid the groundwork for the more dramatic spiritual and moral revolution that has followed in succeeding decades.

REBELLION

“If you think rockabilly is just music, you’re wrong. Rockabilly’s always been an attitude” (Billy Poore, *RockABilly: A Forty-Year Journey*, p. 113).

“Rock ‘n’ roll marked the beginning of the revolution. ... We’ve combined youth, music, sex, drugs, and rebellion with treason, and that’s a combination hard to beat” (Jerry Rubin, *Do It!*, 1970, pp. 19, 249).

“Rock music has always held seeds of the forbidden. ... Rock and Roll has long been an adversary to many of the basic tenets of Christianity” (Michael Moynihan, *Lord’s of Chaos*, p. x).

“What made rockabilly [Elvis Presley, Bill Haley, etc.] such a drastically new music was its spirit, a thing that bordered on mania. Elvis’s ‘Good Rockin’ Tonight’ was not merely a party song, but an invitation to a holocaust” (Nick Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock ‘n’ Roll*, p. 58).

“... FIFTIES ROCK WAS REVOLUTIONARY. IT URGED PEOPLE TO DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED TO DO, EVEN IF IT MEANT BREAKING THE RULES. ... From Buddy [Holly] the burgeoning youth culture received rock’s message of freedom, which presaged the dawn of a decade of seismic change and liberation. ... Buddy Holly left the United States for the first time in 1958, carrying rock ‘n’ roll—the music as well as its highly subversive message of freedom—to the world at large. ... LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UPHEAVALS ROCK ‘N’ ROLL WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN FOMENTING IN THE FOLLOWING DECADE” (Ellis Amburn, *Buddy Holly: A Biography*, pp. 4,6,131).

“Elvis Presley was one of the few people in our lifetime who changed things. You hear Mantovani in every elevator, but so what? Elvis changed our hairstyles, dress styles, our attitudes toward sex, all the musical taste” (David Brinkley, *NBC News*, cited by Larry Nager, *Memphis Beat*, p. 216).

Little Richard’s biographer notes that the “wild freedom” of his music “changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people” (Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard*, p. 81). His biographer says, further, that Little Richard “freed people from their inhibitions, unleashing their spirit, ENABLING THEM TO DO EXACTLY WHAT THEY FELT LIKE DOING” (White, p. 66).

There is no doubt that this is true for 1950s rock music in general, but the “wild freedom” of rock & roll is not the freedom promised in Jesus Christ. Giving freedom to the sinful flesh is not freedom at all. It is what the Bible calls “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-16). The wages of giving freedom to the flesh is death: “Know ye not, that to

whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

Little Richard's famous 1956 hit "Rip It Up," summarizes the careless, lustful, rock & roll philosophy: "Well, it's Saturday night and I just got paid/ Fool about my money, don't try to save/ My heart says, go go/ Have a time/ 'Cause it's Saturday night, and I feel fine/ I'm gonna rip it up!/ I'm gonna rock it up!/ I'm gonna shake it up/ . . . Along about ten/ I'll be flyin' high/ Walk on out into the sky/ But I don't care if I spend my dough/ 'Cause tonight I'm gonna be one happy soul/ I'm gonna rip it up!..."

Johnny Burnett and Rock 'N Roll Trio's hit "Tear It Up" was a standard '50s rock anthem. "When you heard Johnny Burnette screamin' out to you to 'Tear It Up,' he wasn't just talking about a dance floor, he was talkin' about how you wanted to live your life" (RockABilly, p. 113).

IMMORALITY

1950s rock is mild compared with the rock music that came later, but 1950s rock was not innocent by biblical standards. In fact, it was morally filthy.

"Rockabilly was the face of Dionysus, full of febrile sexuality and senselessness; it flushed the skin of new housewives and made pink teenage boys reinvent themselves as flaming creatures" (Nick Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock 'n' Roll*, p. 58).

"But now, 'Good Rockin' Tonight,' you know what that means. I had my mind on this girl in the bedroom. I'm not going to lie to you. Listen, man, I wrote them kind of songs. I was a dirty cat" (Roy Brown, composer of "Good Rockin' Tonight," 1948, cited by *Rock & Roll an Unruly History*, p. 15).

Chuck Berry's first rock & roll hit was the dirty "Maybellene" in 1955, and he stirred up frenzy in young people with his carnal music and performances. Many of his songs, which have been described as "slyly vulgar," have glorified sexual lust outside of marriage. Even his 1987 autobiography is "sexually explicit" (*Rock Lives*, p. 23).

Jerry Lewis's 1957 hit was about fornication.

Little Richard's 1955 hit "Tutti Frutti" was a vulgar song that was so filthy the lyrics had to be toned down for public consumption.

"For white Memphis, the forbidden pleasures of Beale Street had always come wrapped in the pulsing rhythms of the blues. ... Elvis's [rock & roll] offered those pleasures long familiar to Memphians to a new audience" (Larry Nager, *Memphis Beat*, p. 154).

Elvis's hit "Hound Dog" was a vulgar blues song that had been published by Big Mama Thornton in 1953.

The Big Bopper's 1958 hit was "Chantilly Lace," in which "a lecherous lover enumerates the unmentionable acts his girlfriend is willing to perform" (Ellis Amburn, *Buddy Holly*, p. 250).

Buddy Holly's 1958 hit "Oh Boy" was about fornication.

Jan and Dean's 1958 hit "Jennie Lee" was about a local stripper.

The 1954 hit "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" was an immoral blues song which Bill Haley toned down.

“Sixty-Minute Man” by the Dominoes, which was the biggest R&B hit of 1951 and which became a pop hit as well, was very filthy.

The above represents only a tiny part of the immorality that characterized early rock music.

THE PERSONALITIES OF 1950s ROCK

The following review of the pioneers of rock & roll leave no doubt that rock music has been rebellious and licentious from its very inception:

CHUCK BERRY

Chuck Berry (1926-) has been called “the single most important name in the history of rock.” He was one of the first inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1986. He “melded the blues, country, and a witty, defiant teen outlook into songs that have influenced virtually every rock musician in his wake” (Rolling Stone Encyclopedia, p. 71). Berry has led the rock & roll choir in a salute to immorality and defiance to authority. Though he started singing at age six in the choir of Antioch Baptist Church of Elledsville, a suburb of St. Louis, he chose the world, the flesh, and the Devil when he reached teen years. He spent 1944 to 1947 in reform school for attempted robbery, and has continued to have run-ins with the law throughout his life.

In 1959, Berry was charged with statutory rape of a 14-year-old Spanish-speaking Apache girl he had brought from Texas to St. Louis. Berry was eventually convicted and spent two years in federal prison. In 1979, he spent 100 days in prison for income tax evasion. In 1988, he had to pay a fine to settle a lawsuit from a woman who alleges he punched her in the face. In 1990, police raided his home and found 62 grams of marijuana plus video recordings of women who were visiting the restroom at his amusement park in Wentzville, Missouri. He was given a six-month suspended sentence, placed on two years’ probation, and required to donate \$5,000 to a hospital. He has had multiple marriages.

SAM COOKE

Sam Cooke (1931-1964) (he added the “e” to his last name when he entered show business) grew up in the home of a holiness Baptist pastor, and began his music career as a small boy singing in the choir. By age nine, he joined one of his brothers and two of his sisters to form the Singing Children. He was baptized at age 11 at his father’s Christ Temple Church in Bronzeville, Illinois. His father began traveling as an evangelist soon thereafter, and the Singing Children accompanied him. In high school, Sam sang with a gospel group called the Highway QC’s. By 1951, at age 20, Sam joined the professional gospel quartet the Soul Stirrers, a group that was extremely popular but did not have a good moral testimony. “During the late 1940s, quartets had become exceptionally popular and moral laxity had subsequently infected the circuit—even to the extent of female groupies following the male groups around for casual affairs” (Viv Broughton, *Black Gospel*). The man who preceded Cooke in the Soul Stirrers, R.H. Harris, resigned to protest the lack of godliness. Cooke, though, thrived in this atmosphere and was extremely popular with young church women. He toured the country for six years with the Soul Stirrers, “shaping up as a sort of holy heartthrob, milking more than just spiritual fervor from his audience” (Stairway to Heaven, p. 79). Historian Tony Heilbut called Cooke “the greatest sex symbol in gospel history.” By 1957, Cooke determined to entertain the world with rhythm and blues, and he was immediately rewarded with the hit “You Send Me.” He had hit after hit. The one in 1962 was “Twistin’ the Night Away.” He formed his own record label and invested in a beer company called Cooke’s Beer.

In 1959, Cooke married his second wife, Barbara Campbell. They already had an eight-year-old daughter. Later they had another daughter and a son. He was never faithful to his wives. He fathered at least two children out of wedlock and often slept with prostitutes to avoid paternity suits. Even as a young man singing with the Highway QCs, he was jailed for 90 days on a morals charge, after being caught bringing pornography to the home of a girlfriend. It was a sin that would dominate him throughout his life. "... the charismatic Sam couldn't stay away from the women.." (Rock Bottom, p. 92).

In 1964, Sam Cooke's 18-month-old son drowned in a swimming pool. On December 11, 1964, Cooke himself was shot to death at age 33. Bertha Franklin, the shooter, claimed self-defense and the coroner ruled the killing justifiable homicide. Sam had checked into a motel room with a woman, but soon thereafter she ran out of the room pulling on her clothes, with Sam following wearing only a sports jacket and one shoe. He broke down the manager's door, apparently thinking that the woman had fled there. The manager, Bertha Franklin, shot him three times and beat him with a large stick. His blood alcohol level was 0.14. "Though some wondered why the successful, debonair singer was found in such a seedy neighborhood, pal Johnny Morissette said that he and Sam often frequented the Sands nightclub on Figueroa, also confirming that Sam had a penchant for hookers and knew the Hacienda Motel 'very, very well'" (Rock Bottom, p. 101). Less than two months after her husband's death, Barbara Cooke announced her engagement to recording star Bobby Womack. They were divorced a few years later.

ALAN FREED

In 1951, disc jockey Alan Freed applied the term rock & roll to the music (largely rhythm & blues) he was playing for teenagers in Cleveland, Ohio, on radio station WJW. He even tried (unsuccessfully) to copyright the term. Freed had a late-night classical music show when he saw the commercial potential for beat music. From his friend Lee Mintz, who owned a record store in Cleveland, Freed learned that young white kids were eagerly buying black rhythm and blues records. Mintz told Freed that the reason for the popularity of the music was the beat and that anyone could dance to it (David Halberstam, *The Fifties*, p. 465). Freed inaugurated a new nightly program, the "Moondog House Party," on a 50,000-watt clear channel station so powerful that it reached a vast area of the Midwest. It was described as "a rock and roll session with rhythm and blues records." Freed created a hip new personality to promote the program, calling himself the "Moondog." On the air, he howled like a dog, beat his desk in time to the music, and kept up a continuous "cool" jabber that made his programs very exciting to young people (all the while "numbing his throat with a pint of cheap whiskey"). After moving to radio station WINS in New York City in late 1954, Freed changed the name of the program to "The Rock and Roll Show." The *Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock* calls him "The original Pied Piper of rock & roll." He "introduced primarily white teenaged listeners to black R&B, expanding its audience and helping to prompt a social revolution."

Freed also promoted the first rock concerts called Moon Dog Balls. The first one, "the Moondog Coronation Ball" in Cleveland, drew over 25,000 to an arena which had an official capacity of less than half that. The promoters had grossly oversold the concert. When officials tried to stop the show, mobs of kids smashed the doors open, overwhelmed the police, and went on the first rock & roll rampage. A gang of kids stormed the stage and tore down the signs. One person was stabbed and many others were injured. The headline in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* the next day shouted, "Moondog Ball Is Halted as 6,000 Crash Arena Gate." Riots, beatings, and stabbings occurred at other Freed concerts. Teddy Reig, tour manager for Freed, described a concert in New York: "At the Brooklyn Paramount, the kids came in, and they tore the hall up like you never seen a hall torn up before in your life. They broke about twelve store windows, stole the suits. And all the fancy furniture out in the lobby..." (Rock & Roll an Unruly History, p. 134). When the police turned on the lights during a concert in Boston, on May 3, 1958, Freed recklessly exclaimed: "Hey, kids, the cops don't want you to have a good time." When the crowd left the theatre, a riot broke out in

which one young person was stabbed and many severely beaten, robbed, and raped. Freed was arrested and charged with incitement to riot and anarchy. Following this, rock concerts were banned in several cities and Freed was kicked out of the concert business.

In addition to his disc jockey work, Freed authored and co-authored several hit songs, organized his own band, appeared in three rock & roll movies, and hosted a television show, the Big Beat. He became extremely wealthy and purchased a luxurious oceanfront estate with 30 or so rooms. In his first year with WINS he grossed over \$750,000. In one 12-day period in late 1957 he grossed more than \$300,000 from appearances and concerts. He made a fortune from royalties on the film *Rock Around the Clock*. In 1959, Freed was indicted for accepting \$30,000 in bribes from recording companies to promote their records on his broadcasts. He pleaded guilty and was given a six-month suspended sentence and a \$300 fine. He was later charged with evading income taxes. Though "Moondog" Freed enjoyed much fame and made outrageous sums of money during his career, he died at age 42, drunk, broke, and in obscurity in a Florida hospital.

BILL HALEY

Bill Haley's (1925-1981) 1950s hits with the Comets defined early rock music. His mother played piano in a Baptist church, but he demonstrated his love for the world at an early age. He released his first record in 1948 with a group called the Four Aces of Western Swing. The next year the group's name was changed to the Saddlemen. By 1951 Haley and his group were starting off their music shows with "Rock the Joint," and later that year he recorded his first rock song, a cover of the blues song "Rocket 88." Haley later said that his early rock songs were recorded after watching pornography and live sex orgies "to get the band 'worked up' but 'frustrated' enough to play frenzied rock & roll rhythms" (John Swenson, *Bill Haley: The Daddy of Rock and Roll*, pp. 34,35).

The group's name was changed to the Comets and in 1953 they came out with "Crazy, Man, Crazy." In 1954 came "Rock Around the Clock," which encouraged all-night wild partying. It was basically a re-write of an old filthy blues song called "My Daddy Rocks Me with a Steady Roll." "Rock Around the Clock" became the national anthem of rock & roll and the largest selling hit, having run through some thirty million copies by more than 100 different groups (Swenson, p. 48). In 1954 Bill Haley and the Comets also recorded Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle and Roll," which encouraged lewd behavior. "A lot of people liked it because it resembled a number of R&B tunes about all-night sex" (Swenson, p. 45). It was wildly popular, becoming the first rock record to sell a million copies.

There was much violence at early Haley's concerts. A concert at the National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C. in 1956, for example, resulted in stabbings and a brain concussion. The fighting spilled out into the street, where more injuries were sustained. In San Jose, California, in 1957, Bill Haley fans routed 73 policemen, injuring eleven people and causing \$3,000 in damage (Bill Haley, p. 76). A concert riot at Asbury Park, New Jersey, on June 30, 1956, left 25 youth hospitalized. A European tour in October 1958 was plagued with violence. A riot broke out at a concert in Paris, France, and "legions of fans pulverized chairs and streamed into the streets screaming 'Long live Haley! Down with the police!'" Ten fans were injured and 50 arrested. The next stop on the tour was Germany, and a riot broke out at the East Berlin concert on October 26. Kids smashed their seats and each other with clubs. They trashed the arena, wrecked music equipment, and threw chairs at the police, who had to bring in fire hoses to disburse them. Driven outside, they rampaged through the city. The damage was more than 30,000 Deutschmarks; there were 17 injuries and 18 arrests. A policeman was blinded in one eye. Even the screening of the film for *Rock Around the Clock* resulted in destruction of property and near-rioting conditions. "Theater seats were torn to shreds by fans in San Francisco and elsewhere" (Why Knock Rock? p. 14). After rioting at the premier of the movie in Manchester, England, it was banned in several other British cities.

The Bill Haley song “Rock the Joint” encouraged young people to throw off all restraints. “It was a song about having such a good time that nothing mattered: ‘We’re gonna tear down the mailbox, rip up the floor/ Smash out the windows and knock out the door.’”

Haley’s records sold 60 million copies during his lifetime, but the money and fame did him little good. His three marriages ended in divorce because of his immorality and heavy drinking. His fourth child died mysteriously in infancy in its cot. In the early 1960s Haley “fled to Mexico in disgrace, leaving behind a sorrowful trail of enemies and unpaid bills” (Swenson, p. 134). There he married his third wife, Martha Velasco, and started another family. His return to Nashville in 1973 to film *Just Rock and Roll Music* was a fiasco. He was arrested twice in the same week for public drunkenness (Rock Lives, p. 79). He was even mean and violent toward the band, breaking furniture, and such things, and he “was run out of Nashville in disgrace” (Swenson, p. 148). On a European tour in 1979, reports came back that he assaulted fans and disrobed onstage. He became increasingly paranoid, depressed, and psychotic as the years passed. “Police would often find him wandering aimlessly after nightfall, lost on some remote country lane, delirious, incoherent, suffering from amnesia.” He moved into the garage, painted the windows black, and installed floodlights outside to ward off imagined enemies. Even to his own children he told wild tales about being in the Marines and being a deputy sheriff, though he had never done those things. Before his death he would visit restaurants and show the waitresses and various customers his driver’s license, telling them he was Bill Haley.

He died with a liquor bottle in his hand on February 9, 1981, at age 55. The cause of death was a presumed heart attack. He “died a broken, insane man” (Swenson, p. 162). (Rudy Pompilli, who played saxophone for Bill Haley’s Comets and was Haley’s right hand man, died in February 1976 at age 48.)

SCREAMIN’ JAY HAWKINS

Most famous for his 1956 hit “I Put a Spell on You,” Screamin’ Jay Hawkins (1929-2000) performed and recorded rock & roll and R&B for five decades. The aforementioned song, which was banned by most radio stations, was not merely a form of entertainment. The original recording of “I Put a Spell on You” was done after the Hawkins and his band members got drunk and “some type of presence seemed to seize him.” He began “grunting, growling, screaming, gurgling in strange unknown tongues, and wildly dancing around the studio” (Heartbeat of the Dragon, p. 40). Hawkins studied voodoo and had a large library of material on the occult. He was raised by an Indian woman who was involved in occultism. “If my Blackfoot Indian mother was from Africa you would call her a witch doctor; if she was from New Orleans, you’d call her a voodoo priestess. I just put it to music” (Spin magazine, April 1990). Hawkins performed with a skull he called “Henry” and a plastic snake. Other Screamin’ Jay songs include such wholesome fare as “Little Demon” (the flip side to “I Put a Spell”), “Baptize Me in Wine,” “I Found My Way to Wine,” “She Put the Wamee on Me,” and “Constipation Blues.” Screamin’ Jay Hawkins died in February 2000 at age 70.

BUDDY HOLLY

Buddy Holly (1936-1959) was one of the founders of rock & roll, and his influence is vast. Paul McCartney of the Beatles, Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Elton John are just a few of the rockers who credit Buddy Holly as one of their greatest inspirations. His name at birth was Charles Hardin Buddy Holley, and he dropped the “e” from his last name when he began his music career. During his high school years in the early 1950s, he formed a country-swing group called Western and Bop Band. One of his favorite songs was “Work With Me, Annie,” a lewd tune that was banned from most white pop stations (Remembering Buddy, p. 19). After hearing Elvis Presley, Holly turned his musical genius to rock & roll, and in early 1957, he formed the Crickets. Their first recording, “That’ll Be the Day,” became a No. 1 hit that year. Other hits, such as “Peggy Sue” and “Oh, Boy,” quickly followed and have become some of the best-known songs in rock music. More than 40 years later, they still receive regular airplay in many stations across the land. While on a rock tour in the mid-west in February 1959, Buddy Holly and two other rockers, the

Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens, were killed in a charter plane crash in a severe snow storm near Mason City, Iowa. Buddy Holly was 22 years old when he died.

Holly was born in Lubbock, Texas, and grew up in the Tabernacle Baptist Church, a fundamental Baptist congregation. His father and older brothers served in various capacities at Tabernacle. Buddy made a public profession of faith in Christ and was baptized at age 14, but his life did not exhibit good evidence of regeneration. While salvation is a free gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ, the Bible says there are "things that accompany salvation" (Heb. 6:9). If a person is born again, there will be evidence of this in his life.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3,4).

Buddy Holly professed Christ, but he never lived for Christ. Sadly, he was far more interested in rocking and rolling than in glorifying Jesus Christ. Buddy Holly's biographer notes: "He became sexually adventurous, a moral outlaw in his time. . ." (Ellis Amburn, Buddy Holly, p. 4). In his teens, Buddy began disobeying his Christian parents, staying out late, drinking, smoking, shoplifting, gambling, carousing with immoral women. Buddy's friend Sonny Curtis remembers him as "a drinker—loud, a smart aleck, head-strong." Even after publicly professing Christ and being baptized, Buddy told his friends that he had no intention to stop his sinful ways. From time to time, Buddy expressed some remorse for his wicked life, but such remorse in itself is not biblical repentance. Most drunkards express remorse when they are sober. Most men in prison express some remorse about their lives. The Bible tells us that there are two kinds of sorrow that a sinner can have: godly sorrow that works repentance, and the sorrow of the world (2 Cor. 7:10). The sorrow of the world is a remorse about one's actions that does not result in any change. It is remorse about the consequences of sin but is not a repentance from sin. The sorrow that works repentance, on the other hand, is a sorrow about one's sin that results in a change of attitude toward sin and toward Almighty God. Such sorrow is always evident by a change of life (2 Cor. 7:11).

Buddy's older brother, Larry, who is still a member and a trustee at Tabernacle Baptist, believes Buddy was saved but backslidden and the Lord took him home because of his stubborn rebellion (Amburn, p. 54). This is possible, though in Buddy's case there little or no biblical evidence that he was ever born again in the first place. A person cannot backslide spiritually unless he first has been given new spiritual life by being born again. Those who are born again children of God are subject to God's discipline. The Bible says the Lord disciplines his children, and there is a sin unto death.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12:6-8).

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (1 John 5:16,17).

Those who believe Buddy knew the Lord and was disciplined by Him point out that he was only 22 when he died. Further, he was not allowed to prosper from his rebellion. In spite of his great music success, he was almost bankrupt and was living on borrowed money when he agreed to go on the ill-fated rock tour in the midst of one of the worst Mid-Western winters on record. The late Pastor Ben Johnson, who baptized Buddy, testified to E.L. Bynum, the current pastor of Tabernacle, that not long before he died, Buddy told him that he intended to get out of the rock & roll business after he made enough to get out of debt. (This was related to me in a telephone conversation with

Pastor Bynum, August 9, 2000). Instead of getting right with the Lord and obeying the Bible, though, Buddy pursued his self-willed course and was destroyed in his youth. It appears that he wanted to have the world and the Lord, too, and that is impossible. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

Whether Buddy Holly was unsaved or whether he was backslidden, only the Lord knows. What is certain is that instead of shining the light of God’s holiness into this fallen, needy world through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Buddy Holly used his music and lifestyle to promote moral license and to help create the debauched rock & roll society. The book *Rock Facts*, which is published by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, admits that rock is not just a type of music, it is a lifestyle. “... rock and roll has truly become a universal language ... rock and roll also refers to an attitude, a feeling, a style, a way of life...” (*Rock Facts*, 1996, p. 7). Many other secular historians recognize this and acknowledge Buddy Holly’s ungodly influence. “... fifties rock was revolutionary. It urged people to do whatever they wanted to do, even if it meant breaking the rules. ... From Buddy the burgeoning youth culture received rock’s message of freedom, which presaged the dawn of a decade of seismic change and liberation. ... Buddy Holly left the United States for the first time in 1958, carrying rock ‘n’ roll—the music as well as its highly subversive message of freedom—to the world at large. ... laying the groundwork for the social and political upheavals rock ‘n’ roll was instrumental in fomenting in the following decade” (Amburn, pp. 4,6,131).

The Buddy Holly hit “Peggy Sue” was about Peggy Sue Gerron, the girlfriend of Cricket bandmember Jerry Allison. The two disobeyed her parents (who were trying to keep them apart) and eloped in July 1958. The marriage was not happy and they divorced in the 1960s. Peggy Sue subsequently married Lynn Rackham but they, too, were divorced in 1993.

JAN AND DEAN

Jan and Dean were a top-selling surfer duo in the late 1950s through the mid-60s. They had 13 Top Thirty singles and sold over 10 million records. High school friends Jan Berry (1941-) and Dean Torrence (1941-) played in a band called the Barons and recorded a hit single called “Jennie Lee,” about a local stripper. Their No. One hit, “Surf City,” was recorded in 1963. It was co-written by Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. Dean Torrence, in turn, provided lead vocals on the Beach Boys hit “Barbara Ann.” In 1966, Jan Berry smashed his Stingray Corvette into a parked truck at 65 m.p.h. The crash killed the three passengers and caused serious permanent brain injury to Berry. It was seven years before he could remember an entire song, and he “is still partially paralyzed and suffers speech difficulties” (*Rolling Stone Encyclopedia*, p. 495). After his recovery he became addicted to drugs for several years and contemplated suicide. His gambling habit cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars. In 1991, he got married onstage in Las Vegas.

JERRY LEE LEWIS

Jerry Lee Lewis (1935-) is not only one of the fathers of rock & roll, but is also one of rock’s many wild men. His mother was a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God denomination, and like his preacher cousin, Jimmy Swaggart, Jerry Lee attended AOG churches frequently as he grew up. Jerry Lee, though, did not repent of his sin, trust Jesus Christ for salvation, and dedicate his life to the Lord. Instead he went out into the world and served the flesh and the Devil. Jerry Lee’s father was a moonshiner, who had been in prison for making homemade liquor before Jerry Lee was born. Though his mother (sometimes accompanied by her husband) was a frequent churchgoer and is described by her children as serious about the things of God, the home was not happy, and his parents fought constantly. Jerry’s mother began drinking as she got older, and she was known to get into violent confrontations (Linda Gail Lewis, *The Devil, Me, and Jerry Lee*, p. 53). By age 15, Jerry Lee was working at a juke joint and had acquired a taste for liquor. He quit high school after bringing home 29 F’s on one report card. He then enrolled at Southwestern Bible Institute (Assemblies of God) in Waxahachie, Texas, and even preached a little; but was expelled after only

three months when he played a boogie-woogie version of the hymn “My God Is Real” for morning assembly. He wasn’t too sad at being kicked out of Bible school, because he had been sneaking out of the dorm at night and hitchhiking to Dallas to visit nightclubs. Now he was free to pursue his real love.

Jerry Lee was far more fascinated with the world’s licentious rhythms. He loved the blues and boogie-woogie even as a boy. He was fascinated with Robert Johnson’s recording of “Hellhound on my Trail” and other blues records. He listened to Mississippi bluesmen on Natchez radio station WMIS, to dance band music on WWL in New Orleans, and to country boogie on radio programs such as The Louisiana Hayride. He would sneak down to black honky tonks and listen to the music coming from the jukebox. “He would linger by the tar-shingled juke joints where bad black people drank in the morning, and he would listen to the music that came from the nickel machine” (Nick Tosches, *Hellfire*, p. 46). The teenage Jerry Lee Lewis became proficient on the piano and formed his own rock & roll style from a combination of jazzed up Pentecostal music, hillbilly boogie, and black rhythm & blues. Lewis’s biographer Nick Tosches observes that “if you took the words away, there were more than a few Pentecostal hymns that would not sound foreign coming from the nickel machine in the wildest juke joint” (*Hellfire*, p. 57).

At age 22 he vaulted to fame with his 1957 hit, “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Going On.” He became immensely popular with his frenzied rock & roll shows. His skyrocketing career was cut down, though, when the press learned that he had married his 13-year-old cousin before he divorced his second wife. He did not have more hit records until the late 1960s.

Jerry Lee Lewis has been a drug- and alcohol abusing, profane, immoral “party animal,” and his life has been marred by violence, tragedies, and by repeated run-ins with the law. At last count he had been married seven times. In February 1952, when he was only 16, he married a girl named Dorothy, a preacher’s daughter, but he would not stay home with her and she left him in early 1953. That summer he met 17-year-old Jane Mitcham and she was soon pregnant with his child out of wedlock. Her irate father and brothers forced him to marry her, and the marriage was registered on September 10, 1953. The 17-year-old Jerry Lee was a bigamist, because he was still legally married to Dorothy. The divorce was not finalized until a month after his second marriage. The boy that Jane bore for Jerry Lee was named Jerry Lee, Jr. When a second child arrived in March 1955 (a boy named Ronny Guy), Jerry Lee refused to call it his own and left Jane.

In 1957, while still married to Jane, Lewis began an affair with his 13-year-old cousin Myra Gale. He was still legally married to Jane, in fact, when he married Myra Gale in December 1957. The divorce was not granted until May 1958. Thus by age 25, Jerry Lee Lewis was a bigamist two times over. Myra’s father played bass in Jerry’s band. In February 1959, Myra Gale bore Lewis a second son, Steve Allen Lewis. In 1962, little three-year-old Steve Allen drowned in the family swimming pool. In August 1963, Myra had a little girl named Phoebe Allen Lewis.

The 1970s did not bring any peace to Jerry Lee Lewis. Myra filed for divorce in 1970. She testified in court that their marriage had been a nightmare. Not only had she caught him cheating on her, but he also cuffed her around and in 13 years of marriage had spent only three evenings alone with her. He had accused her of adultery, beat her, and even implied that their son’s drowning death was a punishment for her sins. That year Jerry Lee tried religion briefly, went back to church, and vowed to stop playing in nightclubs; but his newfound spirituality didn’t last. Myra’s divorce was granted in May 1971. That October, he married his fourth wife, a 29-year-old Memphis woman named Jaren Elizabeth Gunn Pate. They separated after only two weeks and spent more time apart than together during their stormy marriage. They had a daughter only six months after their wedding. Jaren filed for divorce at least three times, charging him with “cruel and inhuman treatment, adultery, habitual drunkenness, and habitual use of drugs.” Shortly before the divorce settlement in 1982, she drowned in a swimming pool under mysterious circumstances. Jerry’s sister Linda Gail says she took an overdose of drugs. In 1973, Jerry Lee’s first son, Jerry Lee,

Jr., was killed in an automobile crash while driving the jeep his father had given him for his 19th birthday. Jerry Lee, Jr. had spent part of that year in a psychiatric institution possibly because of the effects of marijuana usage. He even thought he was his father and walked around saying, "I'm the Killer! I'm the great Jerry Lee Lewis." (A few weeks before his death, Jerry Lee, Jr., made a profession of faith in Christ at a revival meeting.)

Charlie "Red Man" Freeman, the guitarist for Jerry Lee Lewis, died at age 31. Lewis's drummer, Robert "Tarp" Tarrant, had a nervous breakdown when he was only 22 because of his heavy drinking and drug abuse.

In 1973, Lewis jabbed the editor of Country Music magazine in the neck with a broken bottle when he took offense at one of the interviewer's questions (Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock, p. 85). In 1974, he smashed a fan in the face with a whiskey bottle and "cut the guy's face all up to pieces." In 1975, Jerry Lee shot 25 holes through his office door with a .45 semi-automatic handgun. Jerry Lee was particularly out of control in 1976. In September, he shot his bass player, Norman Owens, in the chest with a .357 magnum handgun in a drunken fit of anger. Owens survived, and Lewis lamely said it was an accident. A week later Lewis was arrested at his home for disorderly conduct. He had been shouting obscenities at his neighbors. In November of 1976 he drove to the gate of Elvis Presley's Graceland, brandished a .38-caliber derringer, and drunkenly told the security guard he was there to kill Elvis. Twenty-four hours earlier Lewis had overturned his \$46,000 Rolls-Royce and was charged with reckless driving, driving while intoxicated, and driving without a license. In 1979, Lewis got into a fight onstage with a fan in Australia and suffered fractured ribs. The tour was cancelled. Also in 1979 the IRS confiscated his expensive cars for nonpayment of taxes.

The 1980s brought more of the same. In 1981, Lewis almost died when he had to be rushed to the hospital for massive stomach surgery. In 1983, about a year after his fourth wife drowned in the swimming pool, Jerry Lee married his fifth wife, 25-year-old Shawn Michelle Stephens. Less than three months after the wedding she was found dead in their home. After a superficial investigation, the death was ruled a suicide by overdose of methadone pills and Lewis was not charged with foul play, though Shawn Michelle was found lying in their bed in a bruised condition with blood on her body and under her fingernails. There were also "the permeation of fresh, small bloodstains around Lewis' Mississippi home." A few months later, the 49-year-old Jerry Lee married his sixth wife, 22-year-old Kerrie Lynn McCarver. She filed for divorce in 1986, but they were reconciled the next year and she gave birth to Jerry Lee Lewis III. In 1988, Lewis filed bankruptcy, listing more than \$3 million in debts.

Lewis has abused drugs and alcohol like a wild man and was undergone treatment for addiction to painkillers. He claims to have spent \$500,000 on the drug Demerol. In the early 1960s Lewis and his band were arrested at a motel in Texas and charged with possession of seven hundred amphetamine capsules. In March 1976, federal narcotics agents confiscated "a substantial amount of drugs" from Jerry Lee's private plane. In 1979, he was busted again by federal agents for possession of cocaine and marijuana.

Lewis was possibly the first rock & roller to light his musical instrument on fire. He did this at a 1958 Alan Freed rock concert. "They still talk of that show, how Jerry Lee had the crowd screaming and rushing the stage, how he took a Coke bottle of petrol from his jacket pocket and doused his piano with one hand as the other hand banged out 'Whole Lot of Shakin' Going On,' how he set the piano aflame, his hands still riding the keys like a madman as the kids went finely and wholly berserk with the frenzy of it..." (Country: Twisted Roots of Rock, p. 82).

Jerry Lee Lewis is what the Bible calls a "double minded man" (James 1:8; 4:8). He is frequently remorseful about his wicked lifestyle, but he does not repent and turn away from it. His sister Linda Gail testifies: "Jerry Lee would go through periods of depression and then back to his

religious roots. Many times, he'd go home to the church in Ferriday, confess his sins to the world, repent and start all over again by the end of the week—drinking, running around and all the other activities associated with his sinful life on the road” (The Devil, Me, and Jerry Lee, p. 73). He has often admitted that rock & roll is “the devil’s music.” When he was recording one of his lewd songs at Sun Records in Memphis in 1957, the 20-year-old Lewis argued with Sun Records’ owner Sam Phillips about whether or not rock & roll was wholesome. The discussion was recorded. As the session began, Lewis protested that rock is “worldly music” and that God requires separation from the world. Phillips argued with him that rock & roll is arousing good feelings and is therefore a good thing. In fact, he said that rock could even save people. Lewis vehemently replied: “How can the Devil save souls? What are you talkin’ about? I have the Devil in me. If I didn’t, I’d be a Christian” (Hungry for Heaven, p. 24). In 1970, Lewis told Rolling Stone magazine: “I was raised a good Christian, but I couldn’t make it. Too weak I guess.” In 1980, he told People magazine: “Salvation bears down on me. I don’t wanna die and go to hell. But I don’t think I’m heading in the right direction. ... I’m lost and undone, without God or son. I should’ve been a Christian, but I was too weak for the gospel. I’m a rock ‘n’ roll cat. We all have to answer to God on Judgment Day.” In a 1982 interview with rock researcher Steve Turner, Lewis said: “How do you see ‘A Whole Lotta Shakin’ and ‘Great Balls of Fire’ done in church? Can you picture Jesus Christ singin’ it? [He then said that he, Lewis, couldn’t picture it.] Everything Jesus preached was against it. It’s the devil’s excitement [at a rock concert] and God’s excitement [in the church]. It’s just which one you want. You can’t go back and forth” (Hungry for Heaven, p. 26). When asked what power falls on him when he performs, Lewis replied: “The power of voodoo.”

Jerry Lee Lewis has enough spiritual discernment to know what he is doing. We believe he spoke the truth when he said, “I’m draggin’ the audience to hell with me” (cited by Nick Tosches, Hellfire, p. x).

Jerry Lee Lewis was, appropriately enough, the first person inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

LITTLE RICHARD

Richard Wayne Penniman (1935-), better known by his rock & roll name Little Richard, was among the first ten inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986, and “every major figure of any prominence in the realm of rock & roll credits Little Richard as their main inspiration” (Heartbeat of the Dragon, p. 27). “A list of those who desired to walk in his flamboyant footsteps reads like a list of Who’s Who in the history of rock & roll. These include Elvis Presley, Mick Jagger, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Elton John, Jimi Hendrix, David Bowie, Sam Cooke, Bo Diddley, Janis Joplin, Screaming Lord Sutch, Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, James Brown, Smokey Robinson, Pat Boone, and Otis Redding.”

“There would have been no Deep Purple if there had been no Little Richard” (Jon Lord of Deep Purple).

“When I was in high school I wanted to be like Little Richard” (Paul Simon of Simon and Garfunkel).

“Little Richard was the God. I grew up on Little Richard in the rockin’ fifties” (Marty Balin of the Jefferson Airplane).

“If it hadn’t been for Little Richard I would not be here. I entered the music business because of Richard—he is my inspiration” (Otis Redding).

“Elvis was bigger than religion in my life. Then this boy at school said he’d got this record by somebody called Little Richard who was better than Elvis—I didn’t want to leave Elvis, but this was so much better” (John Lennon).

“Little Richard is the beginning of rock & roll” (Smokey Robinson).

"Chuck Berry is my favorite, along with Bo, but nobody could beat Little Richard's stage act. Little Richard is the originator and my first idol" (Mick Jagger).

Little Richard grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist family, but he mostly attended the New Hope Baptist Church in Macon, Georgia (Turner, *Hungry for Heaven*, p. 19). He also attended a Holiness church. He learned to play the piano and tried to sing gospel music, but he was rejected from some churches for screaming the hymns. When he was 13, his father (who sold bootleg whiskey) kicked him out of the house because of his bi-sexuality and rebellion. He moved in with a family who ran the Tick Tock Club, where he began performing. By 1950, Little Richard was a homosexual "drag queen," wearing dresses and make-up. He was arrested at least twice for lewd conduct. In 1952, his father was shot dead outside his juke joint, the Tip In Inn.

In 1955, Little Richard had his first big hit, "Tutti Frutti." The words were so filthy they had to be rewritten. Though preachers who denounced him were labeled racists, Little Richard's problem was not his race, but his morals; he was promoting immorality and rebellion through his music. His songs were immoral and his lifestyle was even worse. Little Richard's drummer in the early days recalled: "We were the first band on the road to wear pancake makeup and eye shadow, have an earring hanging out of our ear and have our hair curled in the process." Little Richard called himself the "King and Queen of Rock and Roll." His concerts promoted a frenzy among the young people who attended. One of Richard's band members testified that "thousands of women took off their panties and threw them at us." Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones describes a Little Richard concert in these words: "He drove the whole house into a complete frenzy. There's no single phrase to describe his hold on the audience. It might excite some and terrify others. It's hypnotic" (*The Life and Times of Little Richard*, p. 119). Many concerts had to be stopped because of the violence. At Brighton, England, "Little Richard whipped the audience into such a frenzy that the hall management warned that the show would be stopped." Richard's biographer notes that the "wild freedom" of his music "changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people" (White, p. 81). His biographer says, further, that Little Richard "freed people from their inhibitions, unleashing their spirit, enabling them to do exactly what they felt like doing" (White, p. 66). There is no doubt that this is true, but the "wild freedom" of rock & roll is not the freedom promised in Jesus Christ. Giving freedom to the sinful flesh is not freedom at all. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

Little Richard's famous 1956 hit "Rip It Up," summarizes the careless, lustful rock & roll philosophy: "Well, it's Saturday night and I just got paid/ Fool about my money, don't try to save/ My heart says, go go, have a time/ 'Cause it's Saturday night, and I feel fine/ I'm gonna rip it up!/ I'm gonna rock it up!/ I'm gonna shake it up/ . . . Along about ten/ I'll be flyin' high/ Walk on out into the sky/ But I don't care if I spend my dough/ 'Cause tonight I'm gonna be one happy soul/ I'm gonna rip it up!..."

Little Richard became heavily addicted to drugs such as cocaine and heroin. He also became an alcoholic.

"I became very nasty, which I never used to be. Cocaine made me paranoid. It made me think evil ... When I got real high I couldn't sleep. ... I spent my time locked up in a hotel room. ... The drugs brought me to realize what homosexuality had made me. When I felt that, I wanted to hurt. I wanted to kill. ... They were scared of me cos my homosexuality was so heavy they could see it in my eyes..." (*The Life and Times of Little Richard*, p. 189).

Little Richard continues to dress somewhat in a feminine fashion and use women's makeup, though he is married and is the father of children. In his 1984 authorized biography, *The Life and Times of Little Richard* by Charles White, Little Richard was quoted as saying: "Homosexuality is contagious. It's not something you're born with."

Little Richard is a classic case of double mindedness (James 1:5-8; 4:7-9). He has been in and out of rock as well as in and out of religion. In 1957, he quit his successful rock career, claiming he had been warned of his own damnation in a vision. He took Voice of Prophecy courses (Seventh-day Adventist), attended Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, and was ordained a minister in the Church of God of the Ten Commandments. He stated that rock music is of the Devil and that it is not possible to be a rocker and to please God at the same time. In 1959, he married a Christian girl named Ernestine. In 1964, he returned to recording and performing rock music, as well as to his sex orgies and drug abuse. After he was arrested for homosexual lewdness in a bus station bathroom, Ernestine divorced him for “inciting extreme cruelty by the infliction of grievous mental suffering.” By the mid-1970s he was addicted to a wide variety of illegal drugs and had a thousand dollar a day habit. In the late 1970s he again renounced rock, drugs, and homosexuality, and once more began preaching and singing gospel music, this time for the Universal Remnant Church of God. He traveled and preached to hundreds of thousands of people. For awhile he represented Memorial Bibles International and sold the Black Heritage Bible. In his sermons in the late '70s and early '80s, Little Richard proclaimed that it is not possible to perform rock and to serve God at the same time. He said, “I like Pat Boone as a friend, but he’s trying to serve two masters. ... Pat believes he can go to Las Vegas and do his thing, then preach on Sunday. I don’t believe we can do that. God has not called us to do that. I can never see myself going back to Rock ‘n’ Roll” (*The Life and Times of Little Richard*, p. 202). In 1984, though, Little Richard launched another comeback in the rock world and ever since he has attempted to reconcile his role as a rock and roll star and his role as a preacher. In January 1993, he and Chuck Berry performed at President Bill Clinton’s private inauguration party.

Little Richard has testified that rock music is demonic:

“My true belief about Rock ‘n’ Roll—and there have been a lot of phrases attributed to me over the years—is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic. ... A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you’ll see that is true. I believe that kind of music is driving people from Christ. It is contagious” (Little Richard, quoted by Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard*, p. 197).

“I was directed and commanded by another power. The power of darkness ... The power that a lot of people don’t believe exists. The power of the Devil. Satan” (Little Richard, quoted in *The Life and Times of Little Richard*, pp. 205,206).

Little Richard’s theology is a homogenous mixture of Bible, Seventh-day Adventism, even New Age. In his preaching during the late 1970s and 1980s, he proclaimed salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, but he also preached that the Christian must keep the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath (*The Life and Times of Little Richard*, p. 199). He praised Seventh-day Adventist preachers such as H.M.S. Richards and George Vandeman (*Ibid.*, p. 202). He noted that Ellen G. White’s book *The Great Controversy*, which his mother owned, had an influence on him (*Ibid.*, p. 91). In 1985, he summarized his views: “I can’t go to a Bible study. Most of my inspiration comes directly from God’s Spirit. ... There are good people in all churches. Some Buddhists really love God. Some Jehovah’s Witnesses, too. It doesn’t matter what church you belong to! Only God can read a man’s heart” (*Contemporary Christian Music Magazine*, February 1985, p. 2).

FRANKIE LYMON

Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers had the 1956 No. 1 hit, “Why Do Fools Fall in Love?” Lymon was only 13 years old. The song sold two million copies, and Lymon suddenly became a rich teenager and lived in debauchery, using heroin and sleeping with older women. None of their other songs were successful, and within three years Lymon’s music career was over. He went through a drug rehabilitation program in 1961, but in 1964 he was convicted on a heroin charge. In January 1967, he claimed in an interview with *Ebony* magazine that he was “born again,” but his new lease on life was short lived. In February 1968, at age 25,

Lymon overdosed on heroin in the bathroom of his grandmother's apartment. Joe Negroni, baritone vocalist for Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, died in 1978 at age 37 of a cerebral hemorrhage. Sherman Garnes, bass vocalist for Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, died in 1978 at age 38 of a heart attack.

ROY ORBISON

Roy Orbison (1936-1988) was raised in Wink, Texas. His mother was a former nurse and his father was an auto mechanic. They attended a Church of Christ congregation. Orbison testified of the conflict that he faced: "They were against dancing at my church, and I was trying to play at dances. I wasn't old enough to figure out anything for myself. So I just didn't go to church. I didn't want to attend and feel uncomfortable. I went and played the dances" (*Hungry for Heaven*, p. 22). Orbison became a popular rockabilly/country/pop singer. During high school, he formed a country-pop group called the Wink Westerners. In college, he was influenced by his friend Pat Boone to experiment with rock; he then formed the rockabilly Teen Kings. He signed with Sun Records and had a hit in 1956 titled "Ooby Dooby." By 1960, he had moved to Nashville and began producing hits with Monument Records, beginning with "Only the Lonely."

Though Orbison was one of the few rockers who did not drink or abuse drugs, his life was hounded by tragedy. His wife, Claudette, had a relationship with another man and sued for divorce in 1965. Not long after their divorce was finalized Roy broke his ankle in a motorcycle accident in Britain and Claudette returned to his side. They were reconciled and remarried, but Claudette was killed a short time later in a motorcycle crash. A couple of years after Claudette's death, two of Orbison's three sons died in a tragic fire which destroyed his home. In the 1970s, Orbison went back to church, at first to a Church of Christ congregation, then to a Baptist church that was also attended by other famous country singers, including Johnny Cash, Kris Kristofferson, and Skeeter Davis (Alan Clayson, *Only the Lonely*, pp. 194,195). When asked by the media about his religious faith, his testimony was as follows: "I don't have a pure statement but I believe in Jesus Christ and try to live by the rules of morality and conduct and a certain faithfulness in all things. That helps a great deal—so does common sense. It's very important to me. Your mind is created by a higher power and common sense will often tell you what to do." He said nothing about being born again or holding the Bible to be the supreme authority in his life. It is well and good to "believe in Jesus Christ," and I hope that Roy Orbison was truly saved; but the Bible warns that there are false christs and false gospels (Matt. 24:3,4,11; 2 Cor. 11:3-4), so a Christian's testimony must be much plainer than the one given by the Orbison. The Churches of Christ teach a false gospel of faith mixed with works. In 1979, the 43-year-old singer underwent open-heart surgery. He died of a heart attack in December 1988 at age 52. He had been a pack-a-day smoker for many decades.

CARL PERKINS

Carl Perkins (1932-1998), of "Blues Suede Shoes" fame, was one of the rockers recorded by Sam Phillips of Sun Records in Memphis. Carl started playing in a band in the early 1950s with his brothers James "Jay B." Buck (1930-1958) and Lloyd Clayton (1935-1974). The Perkins boys' mother, Louise, was a Christian who attended church and read the Bible to them, but their father, Buck, was a drinking man who frequented vile honky tonks on the weekends. Buck "became 'aggravatin', as Louise put it, when he started drinking. This mood expressed itself in loud, argumentative discourse and cursing jags" (Carl Perkins, *Go, Cat, Go*, p. 18). Sadly, the boys followed in their father's footsteps. In their teenage years, they began to play in honky tonks and to drink and carouse.

Carl Perkins' 1956 hit "Blue Suede Shoes" is one of the most famous of early rock songs. That same year, though, tragedy struck and his skyrocketing career was never the same. On the way to appear on the Perry Como television program in New York City, the driver of their car fell asleep and hit the back of a truck. The car plunged into water. The driver of Perkin's car was killed, as was the driver of the truck, a 44-year-old farmer. Jay Perkins broke his neck and never fully recovered; he died two years later of a brain tumor at age 28. Mean-spirited Clayton later committed suicide in 1974 at age 39 with a .22 pistol. He had become basically a drunkard hobo before he died. Carl turned heavily to liquor and became a drunkard for a number of years, and though he recorded some minor rockabilly hits and continued to perform and record into the

1990s, he never regained the star success of 1956. In 1963, he severely injured his hand in the blades of a rotary fan. A year or so later his left foot was nearly severed by a blast from a shotgun in a hunting accident. In the early 1990s, after many years of drinking and smoking, Perkins was diagnosed with throat cancer and underwent surgery and radiation.

Carl Perkins turned to religion and spirituality during the last part of his life, but it was not the true Christian faith described in the New Testament Scriptures. Like that of Elvis Presley and many other rockers, Perkins' faith was an eclectic one composed of various elements borrowed from New Age, pop psychology, positive thinking, the Bible, etc. He believed in a vague religious and humanistic "love," but not the biblical love of God that is manifested in the atonement of Jesus Christ and that results in the new birth and obedience to God's commands (1 John 3:16; 5:3). For help with his alcohol addiction, Perkins turned to Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* (Go, Cat, Go, p. 303). During his cancer therapy, Perkins received metaphysical books such as *Releasing the Ability of God* from country singer Naomi Judd (*Ibid.*, p. 377).

Carl Perkins never repented of his rock and roll. In a 1990s interview with his biographer, David McGee, Perkins said:

"Some of the preachers around the South and the disc jockeys breaking our records were saying, 'This music's got to go,' or 'It was sent here by the Devil.' I was hurtin' because I knew it wasn't. I say it makes people happy, brings back memories, plants a thought. I knew in my soul there was nothing wrong with kids getting out on a floor, dancing, and getting their frustrations out through the beat" (*Go, Cat, Go*, p. 392).

In this defense of rock & roll, Perkins glossed over its licentiousness and rebellion against God's commands. He knows as well as anyone that the dancing that goes on in rock joints is not godly. His own autobiography describes the moral wickedness surrounding 1950s rock dances (which are almost innocent compared to those today). The thoughts of the rock musicians and the thoughts of the dancers are focused on the things of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, which are condemned by God's Word (1 John 2:15-17). Perkins was right in observing that rock music "plants a thought," but what type? The thoughts planted by rock & roll are those of sensuality, moral license, rebellion against authority, and other things that are contrary to the will of a holy God. The rock & roll lifestyle almost destroyed Carl Perkins and his marriage many times through the years. It did destroy his brother, Clayton, and it has destroyed thousands of other rockers.

Carl Perkins died of a fatal stroke in January 1998 at age 65.

THOMAS WAYNE PERKINS

Thomas Wayne Perkins (1940-1971), who recorded with Scotty Moore's (a member of Elvis Presley's original band) Fernwood label, died in August 1971 at age 31. He purposefully drove his automobile across four lanes of traffic, over a median, and slammed into an oncoming car. There is evidence that he committed suicide. "His behavior had grown more and more erratic over the years," and he had a long-running dispute with his ex-wife. Before he died he confessed to a friend that he had attempted suicide at least once before when he parked his car across both lanes of an interstate highway at night and turned off his lights. The first person on the scene was a highway patrolman who arrested him and ordered a psychiatric evaluation (Scotty Moore, *That's Alright, Elvis*, p. 219). Perkins' 1959 million-seller hit was titled "Tragedy."

DEWEY PHILLIPS

Like Alan Freed, Dewey Phillips exercised a powerful influence in the early days of rock & roll through his duties as a disc jockey. Phillips moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1942 and developed a taste for the blues by sneaking down to the immoral establishments on the infamous Beale Street. In 1950, he pioneered a three-hour program on radio WHBQ called *Red Hot & Blue*. Its combination of "funky rhythm & blues" and "Daddy-O-Dewey's" wild banter was a huge success.

“Dewey Phillips played as important a part as anybody in the history of the record and music industry toward the acceptance of black music crossing the barrier of the races” (Larry Nager, *Memphis Beat*, p. 129). Large numbers of Memphis high school students, such as young Elvis Presley, were fascinated by Red Hot & Blue and religiously tuned in from nine to midnight. On July 7, 1954, Phillips became the first disc jockey to play an Elvis Presley record on the air. It was “That’s All Right Mama” and the flip side, “Blue Moon of Kentucky.” Sam Phillips of Sun Records, who had recorded Elvis, had asked Phillips to air it. He played it repeatedly. The next night Phillips interviewed Elvis on the air. Phillips went on to host his own afternoon television show, *Pop Shop*. Phillips lived the rock & roll lifestyle, and it quickly destroyed him. He had several car wrecks in the 1950s because of his heavy drinking. He also became addicted to painkillers. His wife separated from him, and he became “virtually homeless.” He had to be bailed out of jail frequently. Phillips moved back home with his mother, and in September 1968, he died of heart failure at age 42.

ELVIS PRESLEY

Elvis Presley (1935-1977) is called the “King of Rock & Roll.” Alice Cooper said, “There will never be anybody cooler than Elvis Presley” (“100 Greatest Artists of Rock & Roll.” VH1) Presley produced 94 gold singles, 43 gold albums; and his movies grossed over \$180 million. Further millions were made through the sale of merchandise. In 1956 alone, he earned over \$50 million. He is the object of one of “the biggest personality cults in modern history.” An estimated one million people visited his gravesite at Forest Hill cemetery during the first few weeks after he died, before it was moved to the grounds of Graceland. More than twenty years after his death, 700,000 each year stream through his Graceland mansion in Memphis, Tennessee; and the annual vigil held to commemorate his death is attended by thousands of dedicated fans, many of whom weep openly during the occasion. Elvis Presley Enterprises takes in more than \$100 million per year. When the U.S. Post Office issued a stamp of Elvis Presley and sold Elvis paraphernalia in 1994, sales exceeded \$50 million. There are 500 Elvis fanclubs still active around the world.

More than any other one rock artist or group, Elvis symbolizes the rock & roll era. Countless other rock stars, including the Beatles, trace their inspiration to Elvis. The King of Rock & Roll changed an entire generation. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Halberstam observed: “In cultural terms, [Elvis’s] coming was nothing less than the start of a revolution” (Halberstam, *The Fifties*). When Elvis appeared on the Milton Berle Show in April 1956, he was watched by more than 40 million viewers, one out of every four Americans. Soon, *Life* magazine published photos of teenage boys lined up at barbershops for ducktail haircuts so they could look like their rock King. Elvis’ biographer Peter Harry Brown correctly noted that to the girls of that day, “Elvis Presley didn’t just represent a new type of music; he represented sexual liberation” (*Down at the End of Lonely Street*, p. 55). Elvis Presley stood for everything rock & roll stands for: sexual license, rebellion against authority, self-fulfillment, if it feels good, do it and don’t worry about tomorrow, debauchery glossed over with a thin veneer of shallow, humanistic spirituality. The rock & roll philosophy created Elvis Presley, and it killed Elvis Presley.

Elvis grew up in a superficially religious family, sporadically attending First Assembly of God Church in East Tupelo, Mississippi, then First Assembly of God in Memphis. His father and mother were not committed church members, though, and though Elvis attended church frequently with his mother during his childhood, he never made a profession of faith or joined the church. The pastor in Memphis, James E. Haffmill, says Elvis did not sing in church or participate in a church group (Steve Turner, *Hungry for Heaven*, p. 20). By his high school years, Elvis largely stopped attending church. Elvis’s father, Vernon, and mother, Gladys, met at the First Assembly of God in Tupelo, but they eloped a few months later. Gladys was 21 and Vernon was 17. Vernon, was “a weakling, a malingerer, always averse to work and responsibility” (Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, p. 16). Vernon went to prison for check forgery when Elvis was a child. In 1948 he was kicked out of his hometown in Mississippi for moonshining, and the Presley family moved to

Memphis. Soon after the death of Elvis's mom, Vernon began dating the wife of a soldier in Germany, and after she divorced her husband, they married. Later Vernon's second wife left him because of his adultery with another woman. Elvis's mother was "a surreptitious drinker and alcoholic." When she was angry, "she cussed like a sailor" (Priscilla Presley, *Elvis and Me*, p. 172). She was "a woman susceptible to the full spectrum of backwoods superstitions, prone to prophetic dreams and mystical intuitions" (Stairway to Heaven, p. 46). Gladys was only 46 when she died from alcohol-related problems. Elvis had a twin brother, Jesse, who died at birth, and both he and his mother were accustomed to praying to this dead boy. They talked to him about their problems and asked him for guidance. Elvis told his cousin, Earl, that he talked to Jesse every day, and that sometimes Jesse answered him (Earl Greenwood, *The Boy Who Would Be King*, pp. 30,32). When they moved to Memphis, Elvis told his cousin Earl that "Jesse's hand was guidin' us" (Greenwood, p. 78). Elvis was a mamma's boy to the extreme, and to her death, she was jealous of any other woman in his life. She and Elvis "formed a team that usually excluded the father." His mother "wanted to be everything to Elvis and wanted more from him than what was right or healthy to expect" (Greenwood, p. 116).

Elvis was a rebel. Even as a 13-year-old, when the other boys wore crewcuts, Elvis "boasted long, flowing blonde hair that fell almost to his shoulders" (*The Boy Who Would Be King*, p. 70). (Later he died his hair black.) Though he wanted to play football in high school, he refused to cut his hair in order to try out for the team. He cursed and blasphemed God behind his mother's back, told dirty stories, and ran around to places he knew he should not visit. By the time he graduated from high school, he was spending much of his time in honky tonks and was living in immorality. This is the boy who became the King of Rock & Roll.

HOW ELVIS BECAME A ROCK STAR

There is a saying, "The blues had a baby and named it rock & roll." Elvis Presley was an important figure in the birth of that baby. Elvis "spent much of his spare time hanging around the black section of town, especially on Beale Street, where bluesmen like Furry Lewis and B.B. King performed" (Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock, p. 783). Beale Street was infamous for its prostitutes and drinking/gambling establishments. Music producer Jim Dickinson called it "the center of all evil in the known universe" (James Dickerson, *Goin' Back to Memphis*, p. 27). Elvis's cousin Earl, who paled around with Elvis for many years before and after his success, said that he "adopted Beale Street as his own, even though he was one of the few white people to hang out there regularly" (*The Boy Who Would Be King*, p. 121). B.B. King said: "I knew Elvis before he was popular. He used to come around and be around us a lot. There was a place we used to go and hang out on Beale Street" (King, *A Time to Rock*, p. 35). Well-known bluesman Calvin Newborn (brother of Phineas Newborn, Jr.) said that Elvis often stopped by such local nightspots as the Flamingo Room on Beale Street or the Plantation Inn in West Memphis to hear blues bands. Elvis listened to radio WDIA, "a flagship blues station of the South that featured such flamboyant black disk jockeys as Rufus Thomas and B.B. King" (Rock Lives, p. 38). Elvis also listened to radio station WHBQ's nine-to-midnight Red Hot & Blue program hosted by Dewey Mills Phillips. It was Phillips, in July 1954, who became the first disc jockey to play an Elvis Presley record on the air. Elvis's first guitarist, Scotty Moore, learned many of his guitar licks from an old black blues player who worked with him before he teamed up with Elvis (Scotty Moore, *That's Alright, Elvis*, p. 57). Sam Phillips, owner of Sun Records, was looking for "a white man with a Negro sound and the Negro feel," because he believed the black blues and boogie-woogie music could become tremendously popular among white people if presented in the right way. Phillips had said, "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars." Phillips also said he was looking for "something ugly" (James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, p. 71). That's a pretty good description morally and spiritually of rock & roll. Sam Phillips found his man in Elvis, and in 1954 he roared to popularity with "That's All Right, Mama," a song written by black bluesman Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup. The flipside of that hit single was "Blue Moon of Kentucky," which was a country song that Elvis hopped up and gave "a bluesy spin." Their first No. 1 hit

single, "Mystery Train," was also an old blues number. Six of the 15 songs Elvis recorded for Sun Records (before going over to RCA-Victor a year later) were from black bluesmen.

By 1956, Presley was a national rock star and teenage idol, and his music and image had a tremendously unwholesome effect upon young people. Parents, pastors, and teachers condemned Elvis's sensual music and suggestive dancing and warned of the evil influence he was exercising among young people. They were right, but the onslaught of rock & roll was unstoppable. When asked about his sensual stage gyrations, he replied: "It's the beat that gets you. If you like it and you feel it, you can't help but move to it. That's what happens to me. I can't help it" (Turner, *Hungry for Heaven*, p. 21). Describing what happened to him during rock performances, Elvis said: "It's like a surge of electricity going through you. It's almost like making love, but it's even stronger than that" (Elvis Presley, cited by James Miller, *Flowers in the Dustbin*, p. 83). Elvis correctly observed the licentious power of the rock & roll beat.

Between March 1958 and March 1960 Elvis served in the army, then resumed his music and movie career where he had left off. He had many top ten hits in the first half of the 1960s.

ELVIS'S ABIDING LOVE FOR SOUTHERN GOSPEL NOT EVIDENCE OF SALVATION

Elvis performed and recorded many gospel songs. In the early 1950s he attended all-night gospel quartet concerts at the First Assembly of God and Ellis Auditorium in Memphis and befriended such famous groups as the Blackwood Brothers and the Statesmen. When he was 18, Elvis auditioned for a place in the Songfellows Quartet, but the position was given to James Blackwood's nephew Cecil. Later, as his rock & roll career was prospering, Elvis was offered a place with the Blackwood Brothers, but he turned it down. Even after he became famous, Elvis continued attending Southern gospel sings and the National Quartet Convention. In the early years of his rock & roll career, he sang some with the Blackwood Brothers and the Statesmen at all-night sings at Ellis Auditorium in Memphis (Taylor, *Happy Rhythms*, p. 117). Elvis told pop singer Johnny Rivers that he patterned his singing style after Jake Hess of the Statesmen Quartet (*Happy Rhythm*, p. 49). The Jordanaires performed as background singers on Elvis Presley records and as session singers for many other raunchy rock and country recordings. Members of the Speer Family (Ben and Brock) also sang on Elvis recordings, including "I've Got a Woman" and "Heartbreak Hotel." The Jordanaires provided vocals for Elvis's 1956 megahit "Hound Dog." The Jordanaires toured with Eddy Arnold as well as with Elvis. They also performed on some of Elvis's indecent movies. J.D. Sumner and the Stamps toured with Elvis from 1969 until his death in 1977, performing backup for the King of Rock & Roll in sin-holes such as Las Vegas nightclubs. Ed Hill, one of the singers with the Stamps, was Elvis's announcer for two years. It was Hill who concluded the Elvis concerts with: "Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis has left the building. Goodbye, and God bless you." (During the years in which Sumner and the Stamps were backing Elvis Presley at Las Vegas and elsewhere, Sumner's nephew, Donnie, who sang in the group, became a drug addict and was lured into the licentious pop music field.) Sumner helped arrange Elvis's funeral, and the Stamps, the Statesmen, and James Blackwood provided the music. After Elvis's death, J.D. Sumner and the Stamps performed rock concerts in tribute to Elvis Presley.

Elvis's love for gospel music is not evidence that he was born again. His on-again, off-again profession of faith in Christ also was not evidence that he was saved. Three independent Baptist preachers have testified that Elvis told them that he had trusted Jesus as his Savior in his younger years but was backslidden. There was no biblical evidence for that, though. We must remember that Elvis grew up around churches and understood all of the terminology. There was never a time, though, when Elvis's life changed. Empty professions of faith do not constitute biblical salvation. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Elvis liked some gospel music but he did not like Bible preaching. He refused to allow anyone, including God, tell him how to live his life. That is evidence of an unregenerate heart.

We agree with the following sad, but honest, assessment of Elvis's life:

"Elvis Presley never stood for anything. He made no sacrifices, fought no battles, suffered no martyrdom, never raised a finger to struggle on behalf of what he believed or claimed to believe. Even gospel, the music he cherished above all, he travestied and commercialized and soft-soaped to the point where it became nauseating. ... Essentially, Elvis was a phony. ... He feigned piety, but his spirituals sound insincere or histrionic" (Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, pp. 187,188).

The Bible warns that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4); and while we hope Elvis did trust Jesus Christ as God and Savior before he died, there is no evidence that he truly repented of his sin or separated from the world or believed in the Christ of the Bible. The book he took to the bathroom just before he died was either *The Force of Jesus* by Frank Adams or *The Scientific Search for the Face of Jesus*, depending on various accounts. Both books present an unscriptural, pagan christ. Elvis never made a public profession of faith in Christ, was never baptized, and never joined a church. Pastor Hamill, former pastor of First Assembly of God in Memphis, says that Presley visited him in the late 1950s, when he was at the height of his rock & roll powers, and testified: "Pastor, I'm the most miserable young man you've ever seen. I've got all the money I'll ever need to spend. I've got millions of fans. I've got friends. But I'm doing what you taught me not to do, and I'm not doing the things you taught me to do" (Steve Turner, *Hungry for Heaven*, p. 20).

ELVIS'S DRUG ABUSE KILLED HIM

Elvis did not drink, but he abused drugs most of his life. He began using amphetamines and Benzedrine to give him a lift when he began his rock & roll career in the first half of the 1950s. It is possible that they were first given to him by Memphis disc jockey Dewey Phillips, who helped popularize Elvis's music by playing his songs repeatedly (Goldman, p. 9). The drugs "transformed the shy, mute, passive 'Baby Elvis' of those years into the Hillbilly Cat." He also used marijuana some and took LSD at least once. In her autobiography, Priscilla Presley says that Elvis was using drugs heavily by 1960 and that his personality changed dramatically. After the breakup of his short-lived marriage in 1973, Elvis "was hopelessly drug-dependent." He abused barbiturates and narcotics so heavily that he destroyed himself. He died on August 16, 1977, at age 42 in his bathroom at Graceland, of a shutdown of his central nervous system caused by polypharmacy, or the combined effect of a number of drugs. There is some evidence, in fact, that Elvis committed suicide (Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, pp. 161-175). He had attempted suicide in 1967 just before his marriage. Fourteen drugs were found in his body during the autopsy, including toxic or near toxic levels of four. Dr. Norman Weissman, director of operations at Bio-Sciences Laboratories, where the toxicity tests were performed, testified that he had never seen so many drugs in one specimen. Elvis's doctor, George Nichopolous, had prescribed 19,000 pills and vials for Elvis in the last 31.5 months of his life. Elvis required 5,110 pills per year just for his sleeping routine. Elvis also obtained drugs from many other sources, both legal and illegal! It was estimated that he spent at least \$1 million per year on drugs and drug prescribing doctors (Goldman, p. 56). Dr. Nichopolous's head nurse, Tish Henley, actually lived on the grounds of Graceland and monitored Elvis's drug consumption. In 1980, Nichopolous was found in violation of the prescribing rules of the Tennessee Board of Medical Examiners, and he lost his license for three months and was put on probation for three years. In 1992, his medical license was revoked permanently.

After a protracted legal battle, Elvis's daughter, Lisa Marie, inherited his entire estate, now valued at over \$100 million. Graceland was made into a museum, and it is visited by more than 650,000 per year.

A SELF-CENTERED MAN

Elvis was self-centered to the extreme. Though he gave away many expensive gifts, including fancy automobiles and jewelry, it was obvious that he used these to obtain his own way. "But when his extravagant presents fail to inspire a properly beholden attitude, the legendary Presley generosity peels off, revealing its true motive as the desire for absolute control" (Goldman, p. 104). He could not take even kind criticism and was quick to cut off friends who crossed him in any way. "A little Caesar, he made himself all-powerful in his kingdom, reducing everyone around him to a sycophant or hustler" (Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, p. 15). He was hypercritical, sarcastic, and mean-spirited to people around him. When Elvis first began touring with Scotty Moore and Bill Black, they traveled in the automobile owned and maintained by Moore's wife, Bobbie. She worked at Sears and was the only one who had a steady paying job at the time. When Elvis became an overnight star and began to make big money, he purchased a Lincoln, but he never made any attempt to replace Bobbie's car or to pay back what she had put into it for them. Elvis promised Scotty Moore and Bill Black, the members of his first band, that he would not forget them if they prospered financially, but he did just that. While Elvis was making tens of thousands of dollars by 1956 and 1957, Moore and Black were paid lowly wages and were finally let go to fend for themselves as best they could. Elvis never gave his old friends automobiles or anything of significant value. Reminiscing on those days, Scotty Moore says, "He promised us that the more he made the more we would make, but it hasn't worked out that way. The thing that got me, the thing that wasn't right about it, was the fact that Elvis didn't keep his word. ... We were supposed to be the King's men. In reality, we were the court jesters" (Moore, *That's Alright, Elvis*, pp. 146, 155). Elvis turned them "out to pasture like broken-down mules, without a penny." Elvis kept up this pattern all his life. He would fire his friends and workers at the snap of a finger, and he "was not one to give his buddies a second change" (*The Boy Who Would Be King*, p. 197). Bobby West served his cousin Elvis faithfully for 20 years, and was rewarded in 1976 by being fired with three day's notice and one week's pay. Delbert West (another cousin) and Dave Hebler were similarly treated.

ELVIS'S RAGE

Elvis often exhibited a violent, even murderous, rage. He was "notorious for making terrible threats." He cooked up murder plots against a number of people, including the man his ex-wife ran off with and three former bodyguards who wrote a tell-all book about him. He threw things at people and even dragged one woman through several rooms by her hair. He viciously threw a pool ball at one female fan, hitting her in the chest and injuring her severely. One of his sleep-over girlfriends almost died of a drug overdose he had given her and she remained in intensive care for several days near death. He never once went to see her or call and had no further contact with her. According to his cousin Earl, he never apologized for anything. He drew and fired his guns many times when he could not get his way, firing into ceilings, shooting out television sets. When his last girlfriend, Ginger Alden, attempted to leave Graceland against his wishes, he fired over her head to force her to stay. Elvis hit Priscilla, his wife, at least once, giving her a black eye. He also threw chairs and other things at her. Once he tore up her expensive cloths and threw them and her out into the driveway. He even mocked and flaunted her with his affairs. When his father remarried, Elvis treated him and his wife very badly. When he first learned of it, he "threw a tantrum of frightening proportions," destroying furniture and punching holes in the walls with his fists. On one occasion he stormed around the dinner table and threw the plates full of food at the wall, cursing his father and stepmother and blaspheming God (*The Boy Who Would Be King*).

ELVIS'S IMMORALITY

Elvis was a fornicator and adulterer. He had "a roving eye." "His list of one-night stands would fill volumes" (Jim Curtin, *Elvis*, p. 119). He began sleeping with multiple girls per week when he was only one year out of high school and discovered the power of his music to capture sensual girls. His cousin Earl notes that the sleazy music clubs Elvis was visiting "satisfied more than his thirst for music—they unleashed Elvis's sexuality" (*The Boy Who Would Be King*, p. 122). He slept with

many girls before his marriage to Priscilla Beaulieu, and had multiple affairs after his marriage. Priscilla was only a 14-year-old ninth grader when Elvis began dating her in 1959 during his army tour in Germany. At the time he met Priscilla, he had an even younger girl living in his house (Moore, *That's Alright, Elvis*, p. 162). Elvis corrupted the shy, teenaged Priscilla. He gave her liquor and got her drunk. He got her hooked on pills. He taught her to dress in a licentious manner. He encouraged her to lie to her parents. He led her into immorality and pornography. He taught her to gamble. He used hallucinogenic drugs with her. (These are facts published in Priscilla's autobiography.) In 1962, the 15-year-old Priscilla moved in with Elvis at his Graceland mansion in Memphis (after Elvis lied to her parents about the living arrangement) and they lived together for five years before they married in May 1967. (The marriage was probably due to pressure put on Elvis by his manager, who was worried about the star's public image.) Elvis and Priscilla had constant problems in their marriage and were divorced in 1973. Elvis had many adulterous affairs during his marriage, and Priscilla admits two affairs of her own. Scotty Moore's second wife, Emily, said she felt sorry for Priscilla because of all of the women Elvis was seeing. Elvis seduced his stepbrother Billy's wife, Angie, and destroyed their marriage. He then banished Billy from Graceland. Elvis's cousin, Earl, who was his best buddy in high school and during the early years of his music career and who worked for him for many years after his success, describes how Elvis became addicted to orgies involving many girls at one time. Elvis cursed and profaned the Lord's name continually in his ordinary conversation. Even during his earliest concerts he "told some really dirty, crude jokes in between his songs" (RockABilly, p. 120).

WASTING A FORTUNE

Elvis lived for pleasure but was utterly bored with life before he was 40 years old. Elvis sought to be rich, but it came with a curse attached to it and most of his riches disappeared into thin air. Though Elvis's music, movies, and trademarked items grossed an estimated two or more BILLION dollars during his lifetime, he saw relatively little of it and most of what he did receive was squandered on playthings. By 1969, he was so broke that he was forced to revive his stage career. He had no investments, no property except that surrounding Graceland, and no savings. His manager, Colonel Parker, had swindled or mismanaged him out of a vast fortune. (On Parker's advice, for example, Elvis sold the rights to his record royalties in 1974 for a lump sum that netted him only \$750,000 after taxes.)

ELVIS'S SENSUAL MUSIC

Elvis's music was reflective of his lifestyle: sensual and licentious. Many of his performances were characterized by hysteria and near rioting. Females attempted to rip off Elvis's clothes. There were riots at his early concerts. "He'd start out, 'You ain't nothin' but a Hound Dog,' and they'd just go to pieces. They'd always react the same way. There'd be a riot every time" (Scotty Moore, p. 175). Girls literally threw themselves at him. In DeLeon, Texas, in July 1955, fans "shredded Presley's pink shirt—a trademark by now—and tore the shoes from his feet." At a 1956 concert in Jacksonville, Florida, Juvenile Court Judge Marion Gooding warned Elvis that if he did his "hip-yrating movements" and created a riot, he would be arrested and sent to jail. Elvis performed flatfooted and stayed out of trouble. Colonel Parker played up Elvis's sensuality. He taught him to "play up his sexuality and make both the men and women in the audience want him" (The Boy Who Would Be King, p. 164).

TRAGEDY FOLLOWS THE ROCK MUSIC LIFESTYLE

Elvis's first band was composed of three members, Elvis, lead guitarist Scotty Moore, and bass guitarist Bill Black. The lives of all three men were marked by confusion and tragedy. Elvis died young and miserable. When asked about his severe narcotic usage in the years before his death, Elvis replied, "It's better to be unconscious than miserable" (Goldman, p. 3). Bill Black, who formed the Bill Black Combo after his years with Elvis, died in 1965 at age 29 of a brain tumor.

Scotty Moore was divorced multiple times. He also had multiple extra-marital affairs. When he had been married only three months to his first wife, he fathered a child by another woman, a nightclub singer he met on the road. The little girl was born the night Elvis, Moore, and Black recorded their first hit at Sun Records. During his second marriage, Moore fathered another out-of-wedlock child. In 1992, at age 61, Moore filed for bankruptcy.

ELVIS'S STRANGE RELIGION

Elvis did not believe the Bible in any traditional sense. His christ was a false one. Elvis constructed “a personalised religion out of what he’d read of Hinduism, Judaism, numerology, theosophy, mind control, positive thinking and Christianity” (Hungry for Heaven, p. 143). The night he died, he was reading the book *Sex and Psychic Energy* (Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, p. 140). Elvis loved material by guru Paramahansa Yogananda, the Hindu founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship. (I studied Yogananda’s writings and belonged to his Fellowship before I was saved in 1973.) In considering a marriage to Ginger Alden (which never came to pass) prior to his death, Elvis wanted the ceremony to be held in a pyramid-shaped arena “in order to focus the spiritual energies upon him and Ginger” (Goldman, *Elvis: The Last 24 Hours*, p. 125). Elvis traveled with a portable bookcase containing over 200 volumes of his favorite books. The books most commonly associated with him were books promoting pagan religion, such as *The Prophet* by Kahilil Gibran; *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Yogananda; *The Mystical Christ* by Manley Palmer; *The Life and Teachings of the Master of the Far East* by Baird Spalding; *The Inner Life* by Leadbetter; *The First and Last Freedom* by Krishnamurti; *The Urantia Book*; *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*; *the Book of Numbers* by Cheiro; and *Esoteric Healing* by Alice Bailey. Elvis was a great fan of occultist Madame Blavatsky. He was so taken with Blavatsky’s book *The Voice of Silence*, which contains the supposed translation of ancient occultic Tibetan incantations, that he “sometimes read from it onstage and was inspired by it to name his own gospel group, Voice” (Goldman, *Elvis*, p. 436). Another of Elvis’s favorite books was *The Impersonal Life*, which supposedly contains words recorded directly from God by Joseph Benner. Biographer Albert Goldman says Elvis gave away hundreds of copies of this book over the last 13 years of his life.

Elvis was sometimes called the evangelist by those who hung around him, and he called them his disciples; but the message he preached contained “strange permutations of Christian dogma” (Stairway to Heaven, p. 56). Elvis believed, for example, that Jesus slept with his female followers. Elvis even had messianic concepts of himself as the savior of mankind in the early 1970s. He read the Bible aloud at times and even conducted some strange “Bible studies,” but he had no spiritual discernment and made up his own wild-eyed interpretations of biblical passages. His ex-wife, Priscilla, eventually joined the Church of Scientology, as did his daughter, Lisa Marie, and her two children.

Elvis prayed a lot in his last days, asking God for forgiveness, but the evidence points to a Judas type of remorse instead of godly repentance. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). One can have sorrow or remorse for the consequences of one’s sin without repenting toward God and trusting God’s provision for sin, which is the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Judas “repented himself” in the sense that he was sorry for betraying Jesus, and he committed suicide because of his despair, but he did not repent toward God and trust Jesus Christ as his Savior (Matt. 27:3-5). True biblical salvation is “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Had Elvis done this he would have been a new man (2 Cor. 5:17) and would have seen things through the eyes of hope instead of through the eyes of despair. He would have had supernatural power, and there would have been a change in his life. The spiritual blindness would have fallen from his eyes and he would have cast off his eastern mysticism and cleaved to the truth. Elvis’s guilt and sorrow produced no perceptible change in his life.

GENE VINCENT

Gene Vincent (1935-1971) was another one of the early influential American rock & rollers. His 1956 hit, "Be-Bop-A-Lula," was one of the '50s rock anthems. He grew up and sang in church in Virginia. He quit school at age 16, though, and lied about his age in order to join the military. He formed the Blue Caps in 1956 and began recording rockabilly songs. Their performances were "one of the wildest" in the business. "The Blue Caps developed a reputation for violence—they destroyed dressing rooms, set fires backstage, and incited riots at many of their shows" (Rock 'n' Roll Heaven, p. 32). In 1960, Vincent and his rocker friend Eddie Cochran were involved in a terrible automobile accident in London. Cochran was killed and Vincent was critically injured. By the end of the 1960s, Vincent's life was a disaster. Rolling Stone described his life as "heavy drinking, mood swings, and erratic behavior." He was married and divorced four times. Gene Vincent, one of the fathers of rock and roll, died drunk in 1971 at age 36 of a hemorrhaging stomach ulcer and/or a seizure. His hit "Be-Bop-A-Lula" had sold over nine million copies in his lifetime, but he died broke.

HANK WILLIAMS SR.

Hiram "Hank" Williams' (1923-1953) "hillbilly boogie" music, such as "Rootie Tootie" and "Hey, Good Lookin'," had a great influence on early rock & roll. Large numbers of rockers point to Hank Williams as one of their inspirations. He also lived the "rock & roll lifestyle" and died young. He was born in a log house in September 1923 to a poor family in rural Alabama. His mother, Jessie Lillybelle (called Lillie), played the organ at Baptist churches during the early part of Hank's childhood, though she apparently was not a meek and quiet-spirited woman. Tenants at a boardinghouse she ran described her as "mean and violent with a short fuse." She "cussed at" Hank at times. Hank's father, Elonzo, who was called Lon, was a hard drinker who did not live with the family from the time Hank was six years old. Stemming from his experiences in World War I, Lon spent many years in government hospitals and underwent physical and psychiatric treatment. Hank did not see his father more than a couple of times in the 1930s. When Lon was released from the hospital in 1939, he returned to his home town, but he divorced Lillie three years later and married another woman.

Hank's mother tried to steer young Hank into singing for the Lord and laboriously saved the money to send him to a shape-note singing school, but he was more attracted to the world. He started drinking and attending Saturday-night dances when he was only 11 (Colin Escott, Hank Williams, p. 10). He learned to play jazzed-up guitar from Rufus Payne, a black street bluesman nicknamed "Tee-Tot," a pun on teetotaler, which Tee-Tot definitely was not. He carried a home-brewed mix of alcohol and tea in a flask at all times and, like many bluesmen before and after him, died young in 1953 at age 27. By the time Hank was in his teens, his mother apparently had a change of heart and helped him get started in his country music career singing in honky tonks.

By that time Hank Williams was already a drunkard who was undependable at work and reckless with his money. He "was a miserable drunk" who "became surly and contrary." His drinking became increasingly worse as the years passed. He married his first wife, Audrey Mae, on December 15, 1944. (The divorce to her first husband, Erskine Guy, was not finalized until December 5. Guy was in the military service and was overseas fighting in World War II when his wife took up with Hank Williams. Their marriage was illegal in the sight of God as well as in the sight of the law, which required a 60-day waiting period after a divorce.)

In 1946, he began his recording career and by 1948, his records were making the country-western charts. "Lovesick Blues" was the No. 1 country record in 1949. He began singing for the Grand Ole Opry that same year. By 1952, his drinking had almost ruined him. By that year the odds of his showing up sober to a music engagement "were no better than even." The previous year he had been committed to two different treatment facilities, but it didn't help. He was also abusing drugs that were prescribed for his chronic back pain. "He would go to see several doctors, obtain multiple prescriptions, then take more than the prescribed dose." One of Hank Williams' booking agents, F.D. McMurtry, was "amazed at the number and variety of pills that he took." Quack therapist Horace Marshall prescribed chloral hydrate, a powerful sedative and anti-anxiety drug, for Williams. This drug was very dangerous in itself, but when combined with alcohol or other depressants, it was extremely deadly. When his cousin Walter McNeil visited him at a hospital in Montgomery, Alabama, in late 1951, Hank was "desperately unhappy." "As was often the case when he was coming off a drunk, Hank

was paranoid and surly, and, some thought, occasionally suicidal” (Escott, p. 180). He was fired from the Grand Ole Opry in 1952, and his marriage to Audrey ended in divorce in July of that year. Hank was busy on other fronts. Around May of that year, he fathered a child by Bobbie Jett (who already had one child by another man), and he married Billie Jean in October. (Hank first had to hire a lawyer to help her divorce her first husband, and the divorce was not finalized until a few days after their wedding.) He was emotionally and physically abusive to both of his wives. Billie Jean was married to Hank Williams only 10 weeks before he died. After Hank’s death, Billie Jean married Johnny Horton, country/rock singer, guitarist, songwriter who had pop hits with “The Battle of New Orleans,” “Springtime in Alaska,” and other songs. Horton died in 1960, seven years after Hank Williams, at age 35 in an automobile crash. Billie Jean eventually married and divorced four times (Colin Escott, *Tattooed on Their Tongues: Through the Backrooms of American Music*, p. 139).

Like many country/blues/rock singers, Hank Williams carried a sentimental love for gospel music with him throughout his life, and he recorded several religious songs. He never gave any testimony or evidence of having been born again, though, whereas Jesus Christ warned, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Hank Williams, Sr., died on the last day of December 1953 at age 29 in the back of his Cadillac of drug-alcohol induced heart failure. “He had died from the combined effects of alcohol, an undetermined number of morphine shots, and chloral hydrate...” (Escott, p. 241). Williams had sung his own epitaph on some of his songs, such as “Too Many Parties and Too Many Pals” and “Tear in the Beer.” In the latter, he sang: “I’m gonna keep drinkin’ until I’m petrified ... I’m gonna keep drinkin’ ‘til I can’t even think.” He did just that.

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